A

SERMON

OF

Divine Providence,

In the Special Preservation

OF

GOVERNMENT

AND

KINGDOMS,

On *Psal.* CXXVII. 1.

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Published on the Discovery of the Late PLOT.

LONDON: Printed by *M. Clark*, for *H. Brome*, at the Gun in S. *Paul's* Church-yard near the West-end. MDCLXXIX.

A

SERMON

ON

Pſal. CXXVII. 1.

——*Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*

KING *Solomon*, to whom this *Pſalm* is intitled, doth in the beginning of it aſſume the perſon of an *Eccleſiaſtes*, addreſſes his diſcourſe to the people, and inſtructs them who is to be the object of their truſt and dependance; or if King *David* made it for the uſe of his Son (whom he deſigned to leave his Succeſſor in the Kingdom, and therefore took care to inſtruct him early, who was to be his, and the Kingdoms Keeper) he inculcates upon him the ſame leſſon; by ſhewing the being, and neceſſity of Gods Providence, in or- V. Jun. & Trem. in loc.

der to the good regiment of all humane affairs, and to the accompliſhing of thoſe deſigns which men have under the Sun; without which, thoſe means will not be able to produce their ends, which yet ſeem very accommodate to them, and in moſt mens account, might be thought ſufficient to effect them. *For except the Lord build the houſe they labour in vain that build it.* Men may take a great deal of pains to very little purpoſe, unleſs God proſper the work of their hands; though they dig deep, lay the foundations of the ſtructure they
Hab. ii. 9. deſign, upon a rock, and ſo *build their neſt very high*; yet if God ſpeak the word, the rock trembles, the building ſhakes, and then as the
Ver. 11. Prophet ſaith, *The ſtone ſhall fly out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber ſhall anſwer it.* Nor is Gods Providence leſs neceſſary to the proſpering the deſigns of our heads, then it is to the accompliſhment of the works of our hands: For as a City cannot be built without him, ſo nor will it ſtand long unleſs he eſtabliſh it; nor can it be upheld in peace, or defended in war, unleſs he protect and keep it; no provident circumſpection and watchfulneſs of the Magiſtrates, no care and diligence of the Miniſters that attend them, and execute their commands, can ſecure it from ſecret Enemies,

or

or from open violences, unleſs God be pleaſed to ſuperintend and watch over it; *For except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* And as the Pſalmiſt teacheth us that neither the private nor public adminiſtration of affairs can proſper without Gods bleſſing; ſo in the three following verſes the remaining part of this *Pſalm*, he informs us that the very continuance and ſucceſſion of Families muſt be aſcribed to the ſame cauſe; *For loe children* (ſaith he) *and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift, that cometh of the Lord.* That they are at all made and born into the world, and that they live in it, to bear up their Fathers Name and Family, comes peculiarly from the benediction of God, *this is a gift that cometh of the Lord.* So that the main point which the Text recommends to us, is the neceſſity of Gods care and providence to the preſervation of all Government, and public Societies, and without it the inſufficiency of all other means to preſerve them from ruine under the ſimilitude of a *Watchman*, who was uſed to be placed upon ſome eminent Tower of the City; ſometimes in time of Peace, always in time of War, both by day and by night, to give notice of any Enemies approach againſt the City, or of any ſudden evil, ſuch as Fire or the like, ſpringing up within it. And in the handling of this Subject,

2 Sam. xviii. 24, 25. 2 Kings ix. 17. Eſ. xxi. 11.

I ſhall offer theſe things to your conſideration.

I. *That it is God that keeps the City, or the concern that God's Providence hath in the preſervation of Government, and all publick Societies; and this Point is implied in the Text.*

II. *The inſufficiency of all other means, or any thing that men can do to preſerve the public welfare, unleſs God's Providence be pleaſed to ſuperintend and keep it; and this is fully expreſſed,* Except the Lord, *&c.*

III. *The great obligation incumbent upon us to engage God's care to watch over the public by endeavouring to make our ſelves worthy of ſuch a keeper; and this Point is inferred, and it is that Uſe which we are to make of the Premiſſes.*

1. It is God who keeps the City, his Providence is concerned in the preſervation of Government, and all publick Societies.

As ſoon as God had by his Almighty Word created the World, and made his eternal Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs illuſtrious, in this moſt auguſt and beautiful Temple which he erected to his honour; although he furniſhed it with its *portion of Goods*, gave it ſufficient ablities to perform all the offices of its nature; yet he did not *manumit* it, and as if he foreſaw that he ſhould be otherwiſe employed, or that buſineſs would interrupt the

Luke xv.

ſtream

ſtream of his happineſs, did he reſolve to take no further care of it; but as he knew that by the law of its nature it was dependant upon him, ſo did he always deſign to reign over it, to ſuſtain, and uphold it, and to make his Name more glorious, and his Attributes yet more illuſtrious in his Government of it. *The continuance of all things as they were from the beginning of the creation*, the regular motions of the Heavens, the conſtant returns of *Summer and Winter, ſeed-time and harveſt, day and night*, in their proper ſeaſons; the alternate mutations of bodies, and the ſafety of the univerſe, notwithſtanding the mutual oppoſitions of contrary material Principles, doth manifeſt, that the world is no more governed, then it was made by chance, but *that the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and that his Kingdom ruleth over all, that he ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world.*

2 Pet. iii. 4.

Gen. viii. 22.

Pſal. ciii. 19. lix. 13.

Nor doth he only as the common Father of the world, extend his care and providence to his whole Creation, but he more particularly exerciſes it about the concerns of his rational off-ſpring; and yet more peculiarly about them, as they are linked together into ſeveral Societies, and by the benefit of wholſome Laws, prudently formed into various Govern-

ments: for for theſe it is that the Text inſinuates God hath a more eſpecial regard, *For it is he that keepeth the City*, that watcheth over the Nation, and preſerves the publick weal of the Kingdom, and that, both from the ſecret machinations of inteſtine Adverſaries, and from the open violences of Foreign Enemies.

1. It is God who preſerves the Government from ſuffering any notable change, or diſſolution, by the ſecret machinations of home-bred Adverſaries.

There never was, nor, conſidering the preſent conſtitution of humane nature, probably can be, ſuch a Government contrived, and managed, as will give content and ſatisfaction to all its Members; for ſuppoſe men could agree to new-model every Government, even after the *Platonic* or *Eutopian* order; becauſe a very few perſons, in compariſon of the reſt, can but have a ſhare in the Legiſlative or Executive power of it, therefore will a great many in all likelihood be diſquieted, that ſome ſhare doth not fall to their Lot, who, it may be, will think themſelves as able to govern as they are, who ingroſs the Dominion to themſelves.

Numb. xxvi. 11. For this very reaſon we know, that *Corah* and his Company gainſaid Gods own conſtitution;

tion; and it is natural for ambitious and aſpiring men in ſuch circumſtances (of whom there is good ſtore in every Kingdom) partly out of revenge, and partly out of hopes to riſe by a change, to oppoſe themſelves to the eſtabliſhed Government; beſides, thoſe advantages of honour, and reputation, and wealth, which are the uſual rewards of them that bear Rule, will but raiſe the envy and anger of many men who will think themſelves hardly dealt with, that they have not the ſame opportunity of being conſiderable in the world; and this will kindle in them great deſires of change, and make them watchful to apprehend any occaſion wherein they may effect it. Add to this, that oftentimes there are ſo many private intereſts driving on, contrary to that of the publick; and many mens tempers and diſpoſitions are frequently ſo oppoſite to that which is requiſite to make them peaceable and Loyal Subjects; and ſometimes a Magiſtrate may do things that will be harſh and ungrateful to the Subject; men are naturally ſo ready to ſhake off any yoke that is troubleſome to them, and very deſirous to enjoy an unbounded liberty; many men are ſo weary of that which they have been accuſtomed to enjoy, and ſo deſirous of change and Novelty, fancying

cying to themſelves great happineſs in another turn: Theſe things being well conſidered, we cannot but ſay, that it is *God who keeps the City*, from being ruined, by theſe inward cauſes of diſſolution; that it is an illuſtrious argument of the Providence of God, that Government and Society is preſerved in the world, notwithſtanding that ſo many men by intereſt, by inclination, by humour, are ſtill concerned to diſturb it.

King *David*, who underſtood very well the art of Government, praiſes God upon this account, and acknowledgeth this Salvation as his own wonderful work: *Praiſe waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion.*——*Thou ſhalt ſhew us wonderful things in thy righteouſneſs, O God of our Salvation.*——*For thou ſtilleſt the raging of the Seas, the noiſe of its Waves, and the madneſs of the people*, even of that people, who being conſidered under the former circumſtances ſeems as ungovernable as the vaſt Ocean, and yet are by the wiſe and powerful Providence of God ſo ſecretly over-ruled, as to pay due ſubjection to Government, or at leaſt hindred from giving any great diſturbance to it; *For though the waves of the ſea be mighty, yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier.*

Pſal. lxv. 1. Ver. 5. Ver. 7. Pſal. xciii. 5.

And this God doth, *i. e.* preſerve Government

ment from dissolution by intestine Adversaries, sometimes by turning the Counsels of the Conspirators into foolishness, as he did that of *Achitophel*; and by making the hidden things of darkness be strangely brought to light, as in the case of the *Powder-Plot*: And when a Conspiracy is ripened into actual Rebellion, he stops it; sometimes by taking off the principal person concerned in the Defection, as in the case of *Absalom*, of *Sheba the Son of Bichri*, and of *Wat Tyler*; sometimes by disposing the minds of the people to return to their duty, as by *David's* message to the men of *Judah*, after the Rebellion of his Son; and as was done by an Apologue handsomly applied to the Commons of *Rome* by *Menenius Agrippa*.

2 Sam. xx. 22.

2 Sam. xix. 14.

And as God doth by his Providence preserve Government from ruin by the secret Machinations or open tumults of intestine Enemies: so,

II. It is he also that preserves it from the open Violences of forein Adversaries.

For God is in a peculiar manner styled in Holy Writ *the Lord of Hosts*, the sole Arbiter of the success of War; it is he alone *who scattereth the people who delight in it; he that maketh wars to cease in all the world, that breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the*

Psal. lxviii. 30. Psal. xlvi. 9.

chariots in the fire: It is he that can put a hook in the noſe, and a bridle in the lips of a proud and inſolent Enemy, and can turn him back by the way by which he came. When the
Iſa. xxxvii. 29. haughty King of *Aſſyria* boaſted the extent of his Conqueſts, God tells him how it came to paſs that his Arms had been ſo proſperous;
2 Kings xix. 25. *Haſt thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to paſs that thou ſhouldeſt be to lay waſt fenced cities into ruinous heaps.* But when this
Iſa. x. 5. *rod of Gods anger*, and the *ſtaff of his indignation*, had done the work which God had appointed him, then did he *puniſh the fruit of*
Ver. 12. *the ſtout heart of the King of Aſſyria, and the glory of his high looks*, and after a wonderful manner delivered *Jeruſalem* out of his hands.

And it ſometimes has graciouſly pleaſed Almighty God to magnifie his power in the perſervation of a people when a potent Enemy has been ready to devour them, and there has appear'd no probable humane way of eſcaping his fury. For when things ſeem to be deſperate, all help has failed them, and ſcarce
Gen. xxii. 14. hope is left behind, then *Jehovah-jireh*, it is Gods time of appearing with ſuccour, and *in the mount will the Lord be ſeen*; then as the *Pſal-*
Pſal. x. 14. *miſt* expreſſes it, when *the poor committeth himſelf*

ſelf unto him, doth God take the matter into his hand; for he is the helper of the friendleſs.

When one Nation becomes a ſcourge to another, takes their fortreſſes, vanquiſhes their powers, and treads them down as the mire in the ſtreets; though the Conqueror may be only driving on the ends of his own ambition, malice, revenge and covetouſneſs, (for which God will take a time to reckon with him,) yet doth he all this while carry on the great deſign of Gods Providence, and is only the miniſter of His vengeance, which He by him pours out upon that people againſt whom he is ſent; and in this execution he cannot go beyond the Commiſſion which God hath given him; He puts bounds to the raging of the Sea, and to the fury of men, and they cannot exceed thoſe terms which he hath ſet them. So then, that a peoples Enemies do not prevail againſt them, or if they do prevail, that they do not make a full end of them, and *the conſumption doth not overflow in judgment*, is ſolely to be aſcribed to the good Providence of God, which is the great defence of a Nation: *For it is the Lord who keeps the city.*

Iſa. x. 6, 7. &c.

Ver. 22.

And the greatneſs of this bleſſing, that God ſhould have ſuch a ſpecial concern for the pre-

ſervation of publick Peace and Order, and Government, and eſpecially from the evil Machinations of inteſtine Enemies, will appear by conſidering theſe two particulars; and which may paſs alſo for ſuch reaſons of his Providence, as may make the Wiſdom of his doings conſpicuous to us.

1. Becauſe the world would not be otherwiſe tolerably habitable, if Gods Providence did not watch over it, and preſerve that Authority in it which he had conferred on the Magiſtrate. We may as well imagin that a Ship could live at Sea in a great tempeſt, when it is toſſed among rocks and quickſands, and wants a Pilot to manage her; as that Societies made up of men of different intereſts, of diſtracted minds, of boiſterous paſſions and extravagant humours, ſhould yet flouriſh and be upheld in peace and ſafety, if the great Governour of the world did not oppoſe himſelf to thoſe overflowings of ungodlineſs, and took care to preſerve that order which himſelf had conſtituted: If he by whom Kings reign, did not ſuſtein and uphold Government, and defend that Authority by his Providence which he has derived to Magiſtrates his Deputies in adminiſtring the affairs of his natural Kingdom; all Societies would fall in pieces, and confuſion

confuſion and miſery would cover the face of the earth. For how ſhould Juſtice be adminiſtred, where the Magiſtrates Authority is not owned, where every mans will is the meaſure of right and wrong, and where it is accounted no duty to be obedient to Laws? How ſhould property be preſerved, where all incloſures are broken down, every mans right is invaded, and the diſtinctions between ſuperiors and inferiors are confounded? How ſhould a Kingdom ſtand, when the Pillars thereof are undermined, Religion is exploded, mutual Truſt and Fidelity is derided, the offices of Charity are neglected, and men let themſelves looſe to all licentiouſneſs? But thus it would be, if God ſhould relax the reins of Government, withdraw for a while his providential Care and Goodneſs, which mainteins and defends it, and leave things to be ordered by the turbulent and contrary humours of degenerate men. Alas, *who could live, if God ſhould do this?* If he ſhould not reign as King, the flouds would lift up their waves, and rage horribly, and no humane power could be able to ſay unto them, *Peace, be ſtill.* And therefore the bleſſing muſt needs be great, by which Order and Happineſs are preſerved amongſt us, and the world becomes an habitation fit for us.

Numb. xxiv. 23.

Pſal. xciii. 4, 5.

2. By this means alſo all our own ſtudy, and care, and induſtry that is laid out upon the preſervation of the publick is not in vain, but effect thoſe ends to which ſuch means are deſigned; for the work muſt ſucceed which God hath proſpered, when he keeps the city, the watchman waketh to very good purpoſe. And therefore upon the conſideration of this great bleſſing, that Gods Providence watcheth over a Nation for good, we are kept off from all deſpondency touching the iſſue of our own labours about the ſame end; we are taught to rely upon him who is All-ſufficient, and encouraged to uſe all rational means to preſerve our ſelves, becauſe God keeping us, they cannot be in vain. So that being ſecured of Gods Providence, we have all imaginable aſſurance given us, that if we be intent upon the doing of our duties for the preſervation of the publick, the Body Politick will be preſerved in a good Athletick frame and temper: For as God doth not uſe to work miracles to preſerve the careleſs and the diſſolute, who neglect the ordinary means of their ſafety; ſo nor doth his Providence ordinarily forſake them, who uſe all the care that becomes them for the ſecuring of themſelves, and then reſign themſelves to the Divine will and pleaſure.

I ſhould now paſs on to the ſecond Particular, but that it is fit that I ſhould ſay ſomething in anſwer to an Objection, which will ſpring up in every ones mind upon his hearing of the Premiſſes. For if God thus keep the City, that is, has ſuch a care for Government, as has been declared, then how comes it to paſs that Government is ſometimes overturned by the arms of a proſperous rabble, that a flouriſhing Nation is ſomtimes brought to ruin by the evil devices of Inteſtine, and ſometimes by the invaſion of Foreign Enemies? How comes God to permit wickedneſs to poſſeſs the place of judgment, and iniquity the place of righteouſneſs? all civil and ſacred rights to be invaded, and nothing but confuſion and deſolation to be ſpread over a Nation. Eccl. iii. 16.

For anſwer to which doubts it muſt be conſidered, That a Nation may by their ſins forfeit all the right it had to Gods providential care and Protection over it; ſo that he may in juſtice leave it to be puniſht by the malice and rage of its enemies, and uſe them as his rod, to ſcourge the wickedneſs of a perverſe and rebellious people. That God has frequently dealt thus with ſeveral publick Communities, when their ſins have been ripe for vengeance, the Hiſtories of his dealings with ſeveral Nations Gen. xv. 16. Lev. xviii. 24, 25. Deut. xxxii. 19. 2 Kings xvii. 6, 7, 18.

2 Chro. xxxvi. 14, 17. St. Luke xix. 41, 42, 43, 44. 1 Theſ. ii. 15, 16.

ons ſet down in the Holy Scriptures, make clearly evident. And that there is very good reaſon that he ſtill ſhould do ſo in the like caſes, that is, puniſh a Nation ſeverely, when its ſins reach heaven, and ſomtimes blot it out from under it, when it is paſt all remedy, will appear evident alſo to the ſober conſiderer of theſe following things: For,

1. Theſe dealings of God vindicate the honour of his Attributes before all men, and give clear demonſtration of his impartial Juſtice and Providence to the world. It may be the people over whom God extended his care, and made them dwell at eaſe, *ſacrificed to their own net, and burnt incenſe to their drag*, aſcribed their proſperity to their own policies, and thought that their ſucceſs was the ſole product of their own wiſdom and induſtry; or it may be, they begun to think God ſuch a one as themſelves, that their proſperity was an approbation of their wickedneſs, that the reſpite of judgment was the remiſſion of their guilt, and becauſe the Divine ſentence was not executed, therefore they were acquitted, and *their hearts* thereupon *fully ſet in them to do evil.* Thus thoſe Scoffers whom St. *Peter* deſcribed (2 *Ep.* 3.) thought the evil day was far from them, indeed ſo far, as that it would never

Eccl. viii. 11.

over-

overtake them, ſince all things continued as they always were, they ask, Where is Gods promiſe of his coming to judgment? It may be the impunity of ſuch a people does at length become a ſcandal to their neighbours, and they begin to cry out, *Why does the way of the wicked proſper? Wherefore are they happy that deal very treacherouſly?* And in theſe or the like caſes, it is but neceſſary that God ſhould convince them and the world, by a Demonſtration *à poſteriori*, how much they were miſtaken in their notions of Him and his Providence; ſince now he means to aſſert his own honour by making ſuch a people as notorious for their puniſhments, as they had been infamous for their crimes. For thus did God reſolve to vindicate himſelf and the former methods of his Providence in the overthrow of the *Egyptians*, *I will get me honour* (ſaith he) *upon Pharaoh and upon all his hoſt, and the Egyptiaans ſhall know that I am the Lord*, &c. Jer. xii. 1. Exod. xiv. 17, 18.

2. Kingdoms as ſuch, are only capable of being thus puniſhed by God in this life, in being bereaved of all thoſe bleſſings which make them a happy and a flouriſhing Nation. This is the time of recompence to them; the rewards or puniſhments of the other life being there only to be meaſured out to every ſingle

person, according to the things that he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

3. God makes public Judgments become common Antidotes against the poison of wickedness, by disburthening the world of that heavy load of incorrigible sinners that oppresseth it; and making posterity afraid of imitating their vices, out of hopes of impunity, when they have seen that sin in the end has become so great a reproach to a people, that it *has only brought forth the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.* The *Israelites* whom God had owned in *Egypt* for his own peculiar people, and delivered them thence, from the house of bondage, with a mighty hand, and so as to make his name renowned among all the Nations, and was carrying them through the Wilderness towards the land of Promise; yet their frequent rebellions against God in the Wilderness, made him *swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest*; and accordingly none of them did enter into *Canaan*, save *Caleb* and *Joshua*: but God made them sojourn in the wilderness forty years, that those incorrigible sinners might be cut off, and a better generation of men might be grown up, to possess the land which God had provided for them.

Deut. xxxii. 33.

Heb. xi. 3.

Numb. xiv. 30.

Pub-

Public Afflictions are the laſt Remedies which God uſeth for the curing of public Maladies; but when the methods of his Patience fail, and he is weary with bearing, then the nature of the diſtemper, and the ends of his Government require, that he ſhould lay the ax to the root, and the fan to the floor, and that he ſhould burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire. This account of Gods dealing with *Judah* doth the ſacred Hiſtory give us; *And the Lord God of their fathers ſent unto them by his meſſengers, riſing up betimes and ſending, becauſe he had compaſſion on his people and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the meſſengers of God, and deſpiſed his words, and miſuſed his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his people, till there was no remedy; therefore he brought upon them the King of the Chaldees, &c.* 2 Chro. xxxvi, 15, 16, 17.

It is true, in all National Judgments, good men oftentimes bear their ſhare, as well as the wicked; for they are all equally members of the ſame *Body Politic*, and therefore the ſame diſtempers of State will affect them both. But this ſtill makes a calamity become far the more grievous to the Public, in that thoſe men that are the ſalt of Society and keep it from putrefaction, thoſe that by the fervency of their Prayers and the holineſs of their Lives kept

off Gods judgments for a long time; and when the divine diſpleaſure begins to ariſe, do as *Moſes* ſtand in the gap, and mediate for the people, that the whole Nation periſh not; that theſe men are ſwept away in a common calamity, that bear up *the pillars of the earth*, is very inauſpicious to the Public, and augments their miſeries. God would have ſaved *Sodom* for ten righteous, and it is for the ſake of good men (the Rabbins ſay) that the world is preſerved; to ſee them therefore periſh in the common fate is a ſad inſtance, that *Gods anger is not turned away, but that his hand will be ſtretched out ſtill.*

Pſal. lxxv. 4.

Iſa. ix. 12, 17. 21.

4. National ſins by a natural efficacy produce publick miſeries; fit and diſpoſe a State for its diſſolution. They are like the *fretting leproſie in an houſe*, which diffuſes its venom through every part of the building, and the plague is not to be cured, but by raſing it to the foundation. Thus fell the Jewiſh State by the *Romans*; thus did the *Greek* Empire loſe its glory and ſplendor, and *Mahomet* prevailed; and thus the *Britains* (ſaith *Gildas Sapiens*) were loſt, when the *Saxons* invaded them. And this every Nation tends to naturally, according to the prevalency that Idleneſs and Luxury, Pride and Intemperance and Factiouſneſs have over them.

Lev. xiv. 44, 45.

While

"While States and Commonwealths have "been in their growth and rising, Arts Milita- "ry have flourished; when they have been set- "tled and stood at a height, Arts Liberal; and "drawing to their declension and ruin, Arts "Voluptuary. *Bacon*, Adv. of Learn. l. 4. c. 2. p. 131.

And thus briefly I have endeavoured to give some account, why, notwithstanding Gods great care and concern for the preservation of Government, and public Society, yet a flourishing Nation may be sometimes ruined by Rebels from within, or by the invasion of a potent Enemy from without.

I come now to consider the second particular, and which is expressed in the Text, *viz.* The Insufficiency of all other means or any thing that men can do to preserve the public welfare, unless Gods Providence be pleased to superintend and keep it: For *except the Lord keep the city*, &c.

And this Point, namely, *That all that men can do will not be able to secure the publick welfare, unless God be on their side, and keep it*; stands upon these four following Reasons.

First, Because the over-ruling hand of Gods Providence orders all the affairs of the world as it best pleases him; and this I think is clear in that I have said upon the first particular;

cular; and if it be ſo, then the conſequence of it muſt be alſo evident, *viz.* That the public welfare cannot be preſerved without his bleſſing, by whoſe guidance all things are ordered, without whoſe concourſe nothing can be effected, upon whoſe diſpoſal all ſucceſs dependeth. For how ſhould we proſper, if God be not on our ſide? Are we ſtronger than he? Can we wreſt the Government out of his hand, by our policies out-wit the *mighty Counſellor*, or weary him by reſiſtance, to whom *power alone belongeth*? Or if God be not for us, can we think that he will not be againſt us? Do we ſuppoſe that God will ſtand *neuter*, an unconcern'd ſpectator of all human affairs that are repreſented upon the theatre of this world; not caring who wins the prize, nor who becomes a prey to a powerful and cruel enemy? Is there no intereſt but our own going on in the world? Has not God the great ends of his Wiſdom, Juſtice and Goodneſs to promote, the glory of his Name and Attributes to ſecure, by his providential diſpenſations? Yes of this we may be well aſſured, that God is abſolute and ſupreme in his authority, wiſe and righteous in all his ways, and that he who made all things by the word of his power, will rule and govern them ſo as to illuſtrate his Glory, and accom-

Iſa. ix.

Pſal. lxii. 11.

accompliſh his ends by the power of his Providence.

Secondly, All that men can do will not be able to preſerve the public welfare, unleſs God be pleaſed to keep it; becauſe our underſtandings are too ſhallow, our powers too little, our lives too ſhort and uncertain, to compaſs any conſiderable deſigns, or to do thoſe things that will ſecure a Nation, without the bleſſing of Gods Providence. For,

(1.) The wiſeſt Politicians cannot certainly foreſee what things may riſe in their way to ſtop the attainment of their ends, ſo cannot tell what means to furniſh themſelves with, that may be able to remove thoſe obſtacles. Men cannot bring about their deſigns, but by means that are proper and adequate to them; what means will be ſo they cannot certainly tell, unleſs they could alſo know what impediments they muſt remove, before they can compaſs their ends: this cannot be known, unleſs they could foreſee all thoſe poſſible accidents, which may ſuddenly ſpring up contrary to their deſigns; but ſuch foreſight is beyond the ſphere of a human intellect: The wiſeſt man can but gueſs probably in ſome things, he may be to ſeek in many, and it is poſſible that he may be miſtaken in all. A deſign may go on

on very glibly for ſome time, when on a ſudden ſome undiſcernible accident ariſes, which mars the project, though very finely ſpun, ſtops the Politician in the midſt of his career, and then *the wiſe are taken in their own craftineſs*. *Machiavel* obſerves it of *Cæſar Borgia* (the baſe Son of Pope *Alexander* VI. whom for his Policy he propoſes as a fit pattern for Princes,) that he had conſidered and foreſeen all the conſequences that his Fathers ſudden death might produce; and accordingly was ſo well prepared for ſuch an accident, that his Enemies, of whom he had good ſtore, ſhould not be able to do him any great damage upon it, or to influence the Conclave contrary to his intereſts. But he, as cunning as he was, did not foreſee nor provide againſt that ſudden accident which did fall out, and which was his ruin; for he did not conſider that himſelf might be ſick, as he was, when his Father died ſuddenly of that very Poiſon which they had both prepared for them that they hated, and which was given to themſelves by miſtake; upon which account he could not in that exigent look after his affairs, but was forced to ſhift for his life, which he after loſt unlamented. *Thus* (as *Eliphaz* ſaith) *did God diſappoint the devices of the crafty, ſo that their hands could not perform their enterpriſe.*

Job v. v. 12.

From

From what ſmall and contemptible beginnings have the greateſt matters that could concern the public riſen! Upon what ſlender and ſecret hinges have the fates of whole Nations turned! Who would have thought that *Maſaniello* a poor ſimple Fiſherman, ſhould have in a few days time gained an abſolute unlimited power over the City of *Naples*, and cauſed ſuch revolutions in it, as ſcarce any Hiſtory can parallel? And how was it poſſible for the wiſeſt Stateſman to have foreſeen, and to have been furniſhed with means to have prevented ſuch an accident?

God indeed can certainly foreſee the moſt minute and remote contingencies that can poſſibly ariſe about any affair; he can bring about his ends without means, or by very unlikely ones; he ſometimes *chuſes the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe, the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the baſe things of the world and things which are deſpiſed, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.* Thus did he baffle the counſel of *Achitophel*, which was accounted *as wiſe as if a man ſhould have enquired of the oracle of God*, with the worſe counſel of *Huſhai*. He made *Haman* miniſter to the honour and advancement of him whom he moſt hated, *Mordecai*; 1 Cor. i 27, 28. 2 Sam. xvi. 23. ch. xvii. Eſth. vi, vii.

and afterwards ruin'd him with his own project, and he was taken in the crafty wilyneſs that he had imagined. He at the ſame time delivered the Jews in captivity when they were upon the brink of ruin, even after they had been devoted to it by *Ahaſuerus* himſelf. So great, ſo efficacious is the Divine Wiſdom.

But now men are poſed with every difficulty that ariſes, and even when they have gone a great way toward their deſign, and a little croſs unforeſeen accident emerges, it puts them to their wits end, and daſhes all their hopes of ſucceſs in a moment: For *malum ex quolibet defectu* is here alſo found true; if one link be but broken in this chain of conſequences, the deſired Concluſion will never be inferred.

(2.) Our powers are very little, our hands are too weak to effect all thoſe things which even our wiſdom tells us are neceſſary to be done in order to the ſecurity of the Public Weal; and we muſt be forced to venture much of our affair in another bottom, and commit our buſineſs to Inſtruments, which can act as freely as our ſelves, and not only ſo far as they are influenced by us. We cannot ſay to them, as God does to the waters of the Sea, *Hitherto ſhall ye come, and no further*: We cannot bound their

their operations, for they are free and not natural Agents; and being so, they may several ways spoil the fairest design we can possibly engage in. But admit our Instruments should prove wise and faithful, yet still our powers would be too little, unless we could either so keep under our enemies, that they should not be able to obstruct our affairs; or so to influence them, as to make them promote them. For although neither the power nor the cunning of our enemies should be equal to ours, yet if their malice be great, that may make them very vigilant to gain an opportunity, wherein they may do most prejudice to our affairs.

God indeed can make his enemies serviceable to his ends, he can make them do His business, when they think most certainly that they are driving on their own. When through envy the Brethren of *Joseph* sold him into *Egypt*; this they thought was an effectual course to prove the vanity of his dreams, and to prevent their falling down before him and worshipping him; when loe by that very action God was making way for his exaltation to the Government of *Egypt*, and so for the certain accomplishment of his dreams: and when through false accusation he was cast into pri-

ſon, this was but one farther ſtep towards his Advancement. When *Judas* betrayed, *Pilate* condemned, and the *Jews* crucified the Lord of Life, every one of them was driving on their ſeveral intereſts; *Judas*, that he might get money; *Pilate*, leſt he ſhould not ſhew himſelf a friend to *Cæſar*, and that he might gain the favour of the *Jews*; the *Jews*, that they might revenge themſelves upon him who had propheſied evil againſt them, and prevent the *Romans* from coming and taking away their Nation, upon the ſcore of the common peoples running after *Jeſus* as a *King*.

And yet God did not only blaſt theſe counſels of the wicked, and made their execrable villany ſo far from promoting their ſeveral ends, that it was the only thing that defeated them; (for we know what *Judas* got by the thirty pieces the price of his Treaſon; *Pilate* not long after loſt *Cæſars* favour, and killed himſelf in his baniſhment; and the *Romans* within forty years after did come and took away the *Jewiſh* Nation, and they, once Gods peculiar people, continue yet vagabonds upon the face of the earth:) God did not only I ſay defeat their ſeveral ends, by thoſe very actions which they expected would have ſecured them; but, which is the thing I aim at, he did

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accompliſh his own great and glorious end by the treaſons, and conſpiracies, and malice of his bitter enemies; an end worthy of God, to draw the greateſt good out of the greateſt evil, and by which he manifeſted the glory of his Attributes as clearly, as he did by the Creation of the world: For by the death of his Son did he deſtroy the works of the Devil, bruiſe the head of that old Serpent, his firſt and greateſt enemy; and ſo accompliſhed the Redemption of mankind.

But now to make the force and powers of ones enemies the proper means of accompliſhing his deſigns, is the prerogative of him alone who is omnipotent; but unto man ſuch power is not granted, as to over-rule the actions of his enemies, and to make them in any ſenſe be ſubſervient to his ends; and then, how ſhould he, without Gods bleſſing, be able to ſecure to a people their happineſs? But further,

(3.) We are too weak and inſufficient to compaſs any conſiderable deſigns, or to give any laſting ſecurity to the Public, becauſe of the frailty and ſhortneſs of our lives; we cannot ſecure to our ſelves one moments continuance in our preſent ſtation, then how ſhould we be able to ſecure greater matters? We are daily obnoxious to many caſualties which may

cut us off in the midſt of our days and buſineſs; which may ſurprize us unawares when we are moſt healthful and vigorous, when we are within the proſpect of harbour, and about to enjoy the fruit of our labours: Inſomuch as upon this account we cannot promiſe our
Prov. xxvii. 1. ſelves the life of one day, becauſe *we know not what a day may bring forth.* We are made up and compounded of contrary principles, that are often jarring and claſhing among one another, and threaten to us, that our abode cannot be long in theſe frail Tabernacles, though we ſhould happily eſcape all ſad and ſudden caſualties; nay, though upon the account of our happy and healthful conſtitutions we might hope to reach the ordinary age of man; yet do our lives wholly depend upon the good pleaſure of God, and he may require them when he will, inſomuch as when we attempt the performance of any affair, we can only ſay, as
Chap. iv. 15. St. *James* teacheth us, *If the Lord will, we ſhall live, and do this or that*; but this we cannot promiſe, this we muſt not build upon, without a pious ſubmiſſion and an humble reference of our ſelves and our affairs to the wiſe diſpoſal, to the ſovereign will of our great Governour, *for we are not our own*; and therefore upon this ſcore of our dependent conditions, we cannot accom-

accompliſh any thing without his Bleſſing whoſe we are, and by whom we ſubſiſt. And yet after all,

(4.) Though we were much wiſer and much more powerful than we are, and could aſſure our ſelves of a longer and more ſteady continuance of our lives than we can; yet all this would not do the buſineſs, the employment would be ſtill too arduous to be undertaken, the work too great to be performed by Mortals; the greateſt Monarch would be cruſhed under the ruins of his own Government, unleſs God upheld both him and it. *By me* (ſaith he) *Kings reign*; it is by Gods ſpecial appointment and deſignation that Kings are his *Vice-gerents* in the world; it is by his peculiar care and protection that their authority is preſerved, and that their perſons are at any time fenced and ſecured, from the malicious deſigns or the outragious violences of wicked and unreaſonable men. The nature of Government is ſuch, that it requires a Divine Wiſdom, and an uncontroulable Power to ſuſtein it, and to maintein its intereſts.

For he that can preſerve it muſt be able to penetrate into the ſecret counſels of ſuch as confederate againſt it; he muſt not wait to know cauſes by their effects, for then he may be

be to ſeek for ſuch remedies, as are proper for the curing of public diſtempers, when the opportunity of applying them is at hand; but he muſt ſee the Tempeſt afar off, whilſt it is wrapt up in its ſeed and principle, and may be covered *with a mans hand.* He muſt hold the reins of mens Paſſions in his hands, be able to ſlack their fury, and check their impetuouſneſs; know how to mix and compound their Hopes and their Fears, their Love and their Hatred, their Anger and their Jealouſies, ſo as to make them refract and contemper one another: ſo he muſt extract the moſt ſovereign preſervative of Government out of thoſe things which would be its greateſt bane; and that which in its own nature is apt to diſturb, muſt be ſo managed as that it may promote and advance publick Peace and Security.

He that is able to diſcharge this Province, Pſal. cxxi. 4. *muſt neither ſlumber nor ſleep,* leſt the miſchief that walketh in darkneſs, come in an hour when it is not expected. He muſt have an univerſal influence over all thoſe ſecond cauſes whence ariſe great Dearths, contagious Sicknefſes, violent Tempeſts, fearful Inundations; all things wherewith the life of man is nouriſhed, preſerved and defended, muſt be under his diſpoſal; the Heavens above, and the Earth

Earth beneath, nay, the Winds and Seas, which seem least capable of a Law, must obey him.

Finally, he that can manage this employment, must, after a Nation has been broken to pieces by factions and civil discord, after it has been cast down to the lowest degree of misery, *servants have ruled over it* with a rod of iron, and *there was none that did deliver it out of their hands*; he must be able then to rescue it from utter ruine, to reunite the shattered pieces of it into one again, to give it a Resurrection, and *make the dry bones live*, to *make* David *his servant King over it*, and restore it to its pristine Glory and Liberty.

Lam. v. v. 8.

Ezek. xxxvii. 5. v. 24.

Sedition is commonly the work of mean Varlets; a *Masaniello* and a *Wat Tyler* can give sufficient disturbance to a lawful Government: *Rome* was most endangered by the *Bellum Servile*, the mutiny of its Slaves; for *behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth*: But to prevent public mischiefs or redress them, to restore lawful Powers, to establish and defend our Princes as at the first, and our Governours as atthe beginning, This is indeed a great and a noble undertaking.

These things the Patron, the Preserver, the Saviour of a Nation must do, and these he

only can do, who has infallible Wiſdom, irreſiſtable Power, ſupreme Sovereignty over the whole world; who is intimately preſent to every part of it, fills the whole heavens,

Iſa. lx. *ſitteth upon the circle of the earth*, and *doth whatſoever it pleaſeth him, in heaven and in earth, in the*

Pſal. cxxxv. 6. *ſeas and in all deep places.* So that *our help cometh* ſtill *from the Lord who made heaven and earth*, for

Pſal. cxxi. it is *the Lord who is our keeper*; and *except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* And therefore,

Thirdly, We ſee the great obligation that is incumbent upon us to engage Gods care to watch over the Publick, by endeavouring to make our ſelves worthy of ſuch a *Keeper*; and the conſideration of this is the *Uſe* we are to make of the premiſſes.

For by ſome things that were diſcourſed upon the firſt particular, we might ſee that a Nation might be in ſuch circumſtances, that God would not only refuſe to watch over it for

Lev. xxvi. good, but he would *ſet his face againſt it* to de-

Deut. xxviii. ſtroy it, and to make it become an *aſtoniſhment and a proverb* among all Nations. For God flees from the Tents of the wicked, he knoweth the ungodly afar off, he will have no intercourſe of Friendſhip with them, ſhew no acts of kindneſs to them, but leave them to periſh by their own tranſgreſſions. To

To prevent this great evil, and still to secure Gods protection over us, let us put in practice that advice which the Prophet *Isaiah* gave to his own Nation, *Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well*, &c. And then, *If ye be thus obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*, v. 20. Isa. i. 16, 17. Ver. 19.

Now as there are some great personal sins which do more than others, wast the Conscience, destroy the clearness, the tenderness, the peace of the Mind; and which banish the Holy Spirit from us, and cast us speedily out of Gods presence: So may there be also some great National sins which may quite break the league of amity which has been between God and a people; which may incense him beyond all patience, oblige him to become their enemy, to give them a bill of divorce, and utterly to forsake them; and such are avowed Atheism, open general Profaneness, great abuse of Gods Mercies, Contempt of his Word, murmuring at his Providences, mainteining Factions against his Government, Unthankfulness for Gods Blessings, perverting of Justice, oppressing of the Poor, and the like; and instances might be given how much woe these have wrought

to a people, where they have become National, either by the general practice, or by the practice of those in high and eminent place; or by the impunity of the guilty, when evil is not put away from a land by executing of judgment upon the Transgressors.

Deut. xvii. 12. ch. xix. 13.

And therefore as we heartily desire that publick Peace and Happiness should flourish among us, it will concern every man, according to the station which God has placed him in, to avoid, discountenance, suppress and punish those wasting sins especially, which are so directly levelled against the honour of God, and the fear of His Name, shall I say? Nay, against the Majesty of the Prince, and the safety of the people; which break up the foundations of the earth, and let in a whole deluge of calamities into the world.

When God warns the Congregation of *Israel* to avoid all pollutions, he gives this reason for his injunction, *For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee, therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.* And there are some pollutions which will defile a whole Land, not only make God forsake it, but make it also spue out the inhabitants thereof; when a people grow impudent and incorrigible in their sins,

Deut. xxiii. 14.

ſins, *then the ſhew of their countenance doth wit-* Lev. xviii 25.
neſs againſt them, they declare their ſin as Sodom, and hide it not; then woe unto their ſouls, for they have rewarded evil unto themſelves, ſaith the Prophet. Therefore, if we would ſecure Gods Iſa. iii. 9.
preſence among us, and his care over us, we muſt put away our abominations from before his eyes, and *ceaſe to do evil*; we muſt *not touch* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.
the unclean thing, and then *I will be a Father unto you, ſaith the Lord Almighty.*

And becauſe God hath diſtinguiſhed us as it were, from the reſt of the world, by the greatneſs and multitude of his choiceſt mercies; has ſet up his kingdom among us, the Scepter of righteouſneſs, by beſtowing upon us his Holy Word and Ordinances, the means and advantages of Grace and Salvation, and the tokens of his ſpecial preſence, having ſo made us, as St. *Peter* ſpeaks, *A Royal Prieſthood, a* 1 Ep. ii. 9.
holy nation, a peculiar people: Therefore, there is a farther duty incumbent upon us, as we would have the continuance of God and his Bleſſings amongſt us; and that is, That we ſhould *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are* Eph. iv. 1, 3.
called, endeavouring to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace. Our converſation muſt be as it Phil. i. 27.
becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt; we muſt walk worthy Col. i. 10.
of the Lord, unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in eve-

ry good work; For God expects, and justly, that his vineyard should bring forth fruits answerable to all the care and charge wherewith it has
Isa. v. v. 2, 6. been fenced and cultivated; or else he *will lay it waste, and command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.* In this case our Lord told the Jews what usage they were to expect from God, and what, by analogy of reason, should be any other peoples portion, that should do as they
Matt. xxi. 43. did. *Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* Which heavy judgment may God avert from us! and may he still delight to dwell among us, to watch over us, and to bless us, for Jesus Christ his sake, *To whom*, &c.

Dom. 5. post Trin. Coll.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINIS.

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